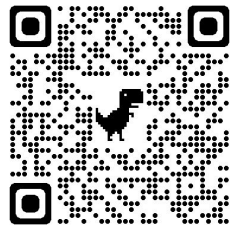
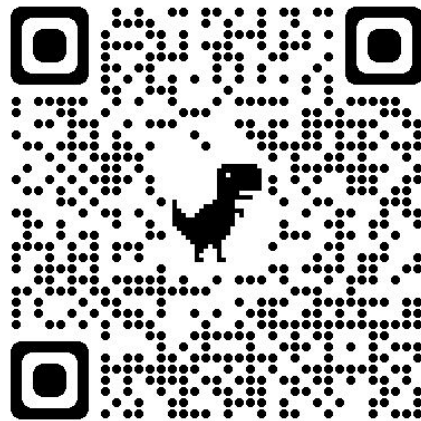


Hard Conversations on mailing lists

Enrico Olivelli - ASF Member, member of a few PMCs

Something about me

- I love Open Source and the Apache Software Foundation
- PMC member in Apache ZooKeeper and Apache Pulsar
- Currently PMC Chair of Apache Curator and Apache BookKeeper
- Committer in Apache Maven
- ASF Member
- Contributor of few OSS projects out of the ASF, like HerdDB.org and Pravega.io
- Working at DataStax, 99% of my day is on OSS software: Apache Pulsar and LangStream.ai



pulsar.apache.org



langstream.ai

Agenda

- Community over Code
 - Apache projects are communities of volunteers
 - How does a project look like and work
- Mailing lists
- Hard Conversations
- Hard Conversations + Mailing lists
- Suggestions

Community over Code

- Apache projects are communities of people
- (In theory) We are all “volunteers”
- Distributed all across the world
- Different cultures (but we use English)
- Different time zones
- Hobbyists, Professionals...

Anatomy of an ASF project - assets

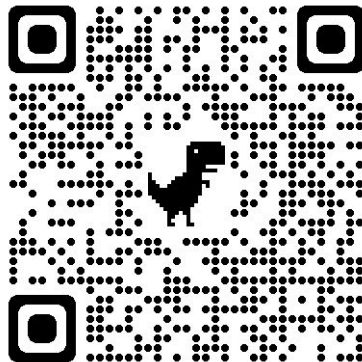
Each ASF project has:

- Some source code somewhere
 - 1 or more repositories
- A Website
- Releases repository
- Mailing lists (user, dev, private, security...)
- An issue tracker (JIRA, GitHub...)
- Other means to communicate (slack, video calls...)
- No bindings with particular companies/vendors

Anatomy of an ASF project - people

You can see people with different roles:

- Users
- Contributors (aka “developers”)
- Committers
- PMC members
 - PMC = “Project Management Committee”



<https://www.apache.org/foundation/how-it-works/#roles>

Interactions in a project

Typical cases of interactions in a project:

- Support users
- Discussions about problems and solutions
- Designing new features
- Patches (PRs) reviews
- VOTE on releases
- Announcing news
- Discussions about the community
- Project Management Committee discussions

Synchronous Communications (chat...)

Characteristics of chats:

- You must be online
- Quick and short answers
- Hard to catch up and participate to discussions
- Hard to refer to previous answers

Ideal for:

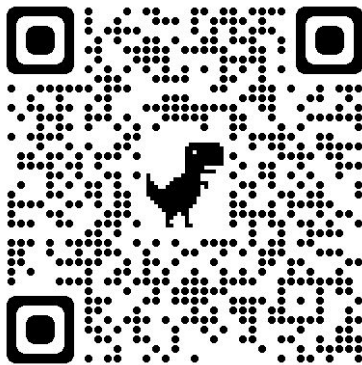
- Chatting !
- Quick responses to questions
- Direct Messages
- Pinging people

Mailing lists and communication

Mailing lists, very old style ! But still great

Why they are the preferred way:

- They are asynchronous
- They are easily archived and linkable



<https://www.apache.org/foundation/how-it-works/#management>

Asynchronous is better !

Why email threads are preferred:

- Folks from different time zones
- People participate in their “spare time”
 - You are not always “online”
 - You can catch up when (and if) you want
- When you write you **“slow down”**
 - More time to think
 - More time to read and understand the questions and the answers
 - English is not the mother language for everyone
- Ideal for:
 - Taking decisions
 - Long discussions
 - Answers to non trivial questions
 - Announcing news

Community = Shared goals ?

- People are part of a community share “something”
- In an ASF project this is a “Project”, some “code”
- But we have different goals:
 - Fun
 - Education/Study
 - Profit
 - Looking for a job
 - Personal fame

Hard Conversations

- Nobody can “take decisions” by themselves
- Different goals and culture -> Conflicts
- Examples:
 - I don't like your solution !
 - Is this really a problem or not ?
 - Is this a security issue or not ?
 - Is something making the project no longer “vendor neutral” ?
 - He is too picky in his reviews !

Examples

Sorry, can't disclose much in a public conference

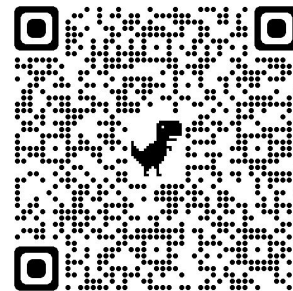


Suggestions for good discussions

- Be objective, not personal
 - Keep feelings out of answers (“slow down”)
 - Use only technical points
- Provide enough context to let the others understand your points
- Ask for more context if you don’t understand the question or problem
- Don’t be shy, speak up and share your point of view (“IMHO”, “my 2 cents...”)
- Don’t be aggressive
- Reach consensus before acting on the shared assets of the project

Suggestions for good discussions

- No more than 2 emails on a thread per day
- if you feel insulted by an answer, stop for a few hours and re-read with new eyes, you will probably see positive aspects you completely missed the first time (because focused on the bad feeling)
- in general, **people have good intents**, didn't think they could be read as aggressive
- be concise:
 - “I'm sending you a long letter because I don't have time to write a short one”



<https://www.linternaute.fr/citation/10605/je-vous-ecriis-une-longue-lettre-parce-que-je-n-ai-blaise-pascal/>

Thank you !

<https://www.apache.org/foundation/how-it-works/>

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